United Nations A/67/335

General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 August 2012

Original: English

**Sixty-seventh session**
Item 20 (c) of the provisional agenda*
**Sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**

# Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report provides an overview of progress on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in response to General Assembly resolution 66/199. Pursuant to resolution 65/158, an update on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon is contained in the annex.

While 133 Governments have reported on their progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, significant loss of life and new record economic losses in 2011 underline the importance of agreeing on a successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2015. Following the call by Member States at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development for these issues to be addressed with a renewed sense of urgency, we are now on the cusp of a major breakthrough in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation across the sustainable development agenda.

Successive editions of the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction* have made an unassailable business case for investment in disaster risk reduction as an essential element in the fight against poverty worldwide and as a means of stemming the wasteful losses from recurring disaster events. The present report highlights that there are many positives to build on, including the growing number of national disaster loss databases around the world, the solid success of the World Disaster Reduction Campaign on the theme "Making cities resilient" and the renewed emphasis on tracking donor investment in disaster risk reduction and ensuring an evidence-based approach to investment in disaster management based on simple need.

* A/67/150.

12-47290 (E) 091012

Please recycle

# I. Trends in disasters and disaster risks

1. The cumulative impact of disasters represents significant lost opportunities for human development. Since 1992, when the international community first met to discuss sustainable development at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, more than 4.4 billion people have been affected in internationally reported disasters, a total of $2 trillion, or an estimated 25 years of total overseas development aid, in damages has been incurred and more than 1.3 million lives have been lost.

2. These figures provide only a partial glimpse of disaster impacts. The losses caused by smaller-scale flooding, localized landslides, storms and fires are not accounted for internationally. However, they directly affect highly vulnerable urban and rural communities and the infrastructure and facilities on which those communities depend. In Colombia alone, the 2010-2011 rainy season was responsible for an estimated loss of $5.4 billion. Many other countries, including Australia, Brazil, Mozambique, Namibia, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka, were also affected by extensive, and in many cases record-breaking, floods during the reporting period. Recurrent flooding in Pakistan, triggered by torrential monsoon rains, affected more than 9.2 million people in 2011. Fiji sustained repeated floods in January and April 2012. Northern Mindanao, in the Philippines, was struck by Tropical Storm Washi, resulting in flooding and landslides that affected 624,600 people, causing 1,495 deaths and destroying nearly 40,000 homes.

3. In 2011, internationally reported droughts affected almost 75 million people worldwide,[1] resulting in agricultural losses, food insecurity and famine among vulnerable populations. In the Horn of Africa, drought affected more than 13 million people. In the Sahel, early warnings were issued, following worsening drought conditions further complicated by political instability.

4. At the same time, the earthquake and tsunami that occurred in Japan in March 2011 and the floods that affected Thailand later that year highlighted that major disasters not only caused direct and indirect losses to the gross domestic product (GDP) but could also interrupt global supply chains in such sectors as the automotive and electronics industries. The interconnected supply chains of a globalized world means that economic losses sustained in one region have global reverberations. It is estimated, for example, that the floods in Thailand set back global industrial production by 2.5 per cent. The earthquakes and aftershocks that occurred in May 2012 in Emilia Romagna, Italy, an area in which small and medium-scale industries are concentrated, caused a combined economic loss estimated at over $6 billion.[2]

5. Disasters are not isolated, contextual events but are indicators of ongoing processes of risk accumulation. A special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change[3] highlighted that, as a result of climate change, the frequency of heavy precipitation events would likely increase in the twenty-first century over many regions and increases in the frequency of warm daily temperature extremes

[1] EM-DAT: the OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database.

[2] Impact Forecasting, "May 2012 global catastrophe recap". Available from http://thoughtleadership.aonbenfield.com/Documents/201206_if_monthly_cat_recap_may.pdf.

[3] Christopher B. Field and others, eds., *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2012). Available from http://ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX.

and decreases in cold extremes would occur on a global scale. Heat waves will very likely increase in length, frequency and/or intensity over most land areas, as will the average maximum wind speed of tropical cyclones in many ocean basins. Climate change, therefore, will increase risks in many weather-sensitive sectors, such as water and agriculture.

6. At the same time, the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change echoed the findings of the *2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction* that the principal driver of increasing disaster risk in the coming decades will continue to be the growing exposure of people and economic activities to natural hazards. The risk to both public and private investments continues to be concentrated in hazard-prone areas, such as flood plains, storm- and tsunami-prone coastlines and earthquake-prone cities. Much of such investment occurs in areas exposed to hazards in low- and middle-income countries. Accompanying processes of inadequately planned and managed urbanization and environmental degradation mean that the risks represent a hidden deficit not only for national Governments and the global private sector but also, and most importantly, for the people who depend on both.

## II. Challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action

7. The past year has seen both critical challenges to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and new opportunities to accelerate it.[4] The rapidly growing levels of disaster risk and the lack of accurate disaster loss data and insufficient resources at the local level, as well as of adequate integration of disaster risk reduction considerations into development, planning and budgets, remain the major challenges. On the other hand, the recognition of disaster risk reduction in the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex) and the summits of the Group of 20 and the untapped potential of private sector and local governments represent new opportunities to further build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters by 2015.

8. The 2009-2011 review of progress against the Hyogo Framework for Action highlighted that while many countries were making good progress in life-saving activities, such as disaster preparedness and response and early warning, disaster risk was not being adequately factored into investment and development decisions. Despite notable exceptions, such as in Peru, public planning and investment decisions are largely unconnected to policies and strategies to manage and reduce disaster risks. At the same time, countries report difficulties in bringing legislation and policy to bear on the ground. Weak capacity in many local governments and ineffective mechanisms of accountability mean that even where countries have developed policies and legislative and institutional systems for disaster risk reduction, they are challenged to address risk accumulation on the ground.

9. In the coming decades, trillions of dollars of new investment will pour into hazard-exposed low- and middle-income countries. How and where this investment

[4] See the midterm review of the Hyogo Framework for Action, available from www.unisdr.org/files/18197_midterm.pdf.

is made will be the principal determinant of whether disaster risk continues to grow in the future. While international financial institutions support Governments in ensuring that risk-financing mechanisms to manage contingencies are in place, this is not enough. The disasters that occurred in Japan and Thailand in 2011 have highlighted the impact when risks hidden in development are externalized. A sustainable global future will depend on the public and private sector working together to ensure that the risks in all new investment are properly accounted for and managed.

10. In my previous report to the General Assembly (A/66/301), I called for any future framework for sustainable development to include a clear prescription for incorporating disaster and climate risk management. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), entitled "The future we want" (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex), clearly heeds my call and provides a number of important opportunities and intergovernmental processes in which disaster risk reduction, including prevention, can concretely support the achievement of sustainable development objectives and more resilient communities. The outcome of the Conference is a solid foundation for discussions and a road map towards a post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework.

11. The Conference participants stressed the need for continued and enhanced efforts to assist small island developing States in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. The multiple ongoing and emerging challenges require coordinated and sustained support. Addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability and building resilience to risk are central in achieving sustainable development and will require a coordinated system-wide approach. A third international conference on small island developing States to be held in 2014 is therefore a crucial milestone to ensure the support necessary to increase the resilience of small island developing States.

12. Gathering data on and systematically accounting for disaster losses is fundamental to building the evidence necessary for the development of prevention policies and programmes and therefore crucial for a full understanding of the economic impact of disasters and the ways in which fiscal instruments can ease the burden on Governments and private organizations. While some progress has been noted over the past year, it is recommended that further work in this area remain a high priority. Nations need to establish accounting systems capable of recording local losses and sharing information between the local and national levels for planning and statistical purposes. In the context of the development of a disaster loss accounting system, a certain degree of standardization may help to better account for losses at the regional level and to support the further development of regional cooperation. A total of 43 States have reported the existence of an updated national disaster loss database, which can inform investment decisions, address underlying risks, strengthen local risk governance and increase partnerships and civil society engagement.

13. Despite the multiple challenges, there are many opportunities to further accelerate disaster risk reduction in various sectors. The Strategy secretariat has engaged with a range of actors and change agents to ensure that reducing disaster risk and building resilience become part of daily decision-making in the business sector and at the local level.

14. In most countries, private sector investment represents a high share of the overall investment. Public investments normally represent only 5 to 15 per cent of a country's GDP, implying that private sector investments are responsible for the other 85 to 95 per cent. Therefore, national economic development and resilience to disasters depend on disaster risk-sensitive investment by the private sector. The Strategy secretariat has increased engagement with private sector entities with the aim of motivating business continuity planning and investment in resilient infrastructure and processes. As a result, there is now a growing global network of private sector entities[5] that share an interest in building resilience and aim to exchange knowledge and experiences and collaborate on initiatives.

15. The aim of the Strategy secretariat is to connect with companies in order to convince them to integrate in their business strategy and operations the five essentials for business in disaster risk reduction presented at the third session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in 2011. A private sector advisory group to the Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Special Representative for the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action is engaging with businesses globally and is committed to supporting Governments and world leaders in disseminating and implementing the following measures: developing and supporting local and national governments' risk assessment; cooperating with multiple partners to prioritize resilience in land-use planning and design; and ensuring that investments are resilient to the impact of extreme climatic events and new risks presented by rapid urbanization, such as stress to ecosystem services and natural resources and governance challenges.

16. Half of humanity is now living in urban centres. By 2050, 70 per cent of the world's population is expected to live in urban areas, two thirds of this in low- and middle-income nations. Much of this growth is taking place in locations already prone to earthquakes, droughts and floods. Nevertheless, urban centres have the resources, knowledge and economies of scale necessary to address the risks. The critical role that local administrations can play in reducing disaster risk remains largely undervalued and underresourced. A lack of capacity and understanding of the issues and resources has been identified as the main stumbling block to making cities more resilient. However, many city leaders understand the benefits of prioritizing disaster risk reduction as part of their political and sustainable development agenda. The "Making cities resilient" campaign seeks to support sustainable urbanization by promoting resilience activities, increasing local-level understanding of disaster risk and encouraging commitments by local and national governments to prioritize disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

17. Building societies that are resilient to disasters requires a comprehensive approach, including the continuous assessment and management of emerging risks, in partnership with the private sector and local governments. Disaster loss databases, disaster risk mapping and financial tracking systems can support both public and private decision makers across all levels in making evidence-based development planning and investment choices.

18. In preparation for the development of future sustainable development and risk reduction frameworks and in order to further advance international cooperation in reducing disaster risk, countries need to take stock of progress in the development

[5] The disaster risk reduction private sector partnership includes some 40 private sector partners.

of national prevention and risk reduction policies and plans and identify gaps and challenges, as well as possible solutions. The fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be held in Geneva from 19 to 23 May 2013, is a major forum in which countries can share some of the lessons and ideas for the future and identify ways to maximize the opportunities presented by the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development.

# III. Coordination and guidance to accelerate disaster risk reduction

19. The Strategy secretariat continues to build on existing mechanisms, such as the global, regional and national platforms for disaster risk reduction, while seeking innovative ways to engage with new stakeholders in order to reach out to all sectors of society.

## A. Strengthening coordination at the global level

### Towards a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction

20. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/199, the Strategy secretariat began facilitating the development of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. The secretariat will ensure that the process is consultative and draws from the findings and recommendations in the midterm review of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters[6] and the editions of the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*[7] and from previous sessions of the global and regional platforms for disaster risk reduction. On the basis of those findings and other inputs, the Strategy secretariat released a background paper[8] outlining elements of the process towards the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

21. A series of preliminary consultations took place early in 2012, and plans for significantly more consultations are scheduled in the coming year, with a view to ensuring as wide a range of stakeholders as possible to feed into the discussions and process. The recent World Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Tohoku, Japan, on 3 and 4 July 2012, also provided an opportunity for countries to discuss the requirements for the future disaster risk reduction framework. At the Conference, the challenges in managing disaster risks in an interconnected world were highlighted, as was the need to fully empower communities and ensure that their knowledge and experience are fully used in planning and crisis management.

22. One of the building blocks of the process leading to the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction will be the upcoming fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will provide an opportunity to take stock of the first period of consultations and refine the next steps of the process. The aim of the fourth session is to continue the momentum for durable and sustained

[6] Available from www.unisdr.org/files/18197_midterm.pdf.

[7] Available from www.preventionweb.net/gar.

[8] Available from www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/25129.

effort by all actors to take shared responsibility in reducing risks and reinforcing resilience in communities. Preparations are advancing well, with particular focus on local governments and cities, the private sector, parliamentarians and academic and science networks during the pre-session consultations.

23. It is expected that the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction will be adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan early in 2015. The Strategy secretariat will support the organization of the Conference. I have requested the Strategy secretariat to closely consult with Member States and other stakeholders on the preparations for and deliberations at the Conference, while taking into account other processes focused on the future sustainable development agenda, including the sustainable development goals.

**Disaster risk reduction in the United Nations system**

24. At the start of my second term as Secretary-General, I identified disaster prevention as one of my five priorities. I called for the development and implementation of national disaster risk reduction plans that address the growing challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, urbanization and population growth, and for special emphasis to be placed on the least developed and most vulnerable countries. For this to be achieved, the United Nations system, led at the country level by resident coordinators and supported by the United Nations Development Group, must draw on the "Delivering as one" principles and capitalize on the strengths and comparative advantages of the different members of the United Nations system through coherent and coordinated engagement.

25. In accordance with resolution 66/199, my Special Representative and the Strategy secretariat have worked closely with the United Nations coordination bodies, such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the High-level Committee on Programmes, on delivering as one in supporting Member States with a view to accelerating progress in disaster risk reduction.

26. At the request of CEB, my Special Representative gave a briefing at its first regular session for 2011. At that session, it was agreed to commit to a coherent approach to mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in programmes and operations through the development of a common agenda and to give disaster risk reduction the highest political support. The Strategy secretariat was asked to lead this exercise. On the basis of the results of a self-assessment exercise, the High-level Committee on Programmes decided to establish a senior-level, time-bound working group, facilitated by my Special Representative, to develop a strategic plan of action to ensure the highest possible degree of coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations system in the field of disaster risk reduction. A total of 28 United Nations system organizations, funds, programmes and specialized agencies, including the World Bank, participate in the working group, which is expected to deliver results by mid-2013.

27. The self-assessment revealed that 90 per cent of respondents considered disaster risk reduction either an institutional priority or a part of their approach. More than 60 per cent of respondents highlighted significant progress towards mainstreaming disaster risk reduction across their programmes. This includes a policy on disaster risk reduction and management approved by the Executive Board of the World Food Programme and a framework programme on disaster risk

reduction for food and nutrition security established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Similarly, the World Meteorological Organization has set disaster risk reduction as one of its five strategic priorities under its strategic plan for 2012-2015. The Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, at its 2011 session, also provided clear direction on disaster risk reduction, preparedness, prevention and mitigation as its contribution to sustainable urban development.

**Monitoring progress on risk trends**

28. The Hyogo Framework for Action is an invaluable instrument for advancing the disaster risk reduction agenda worldwide. The biennial global and regional platforms serve as the main mechanisms to monitor progress in implementing the Framework at the global and regional levels. At the national level, by 2011, 133 countries had used the National HFA Monitor, an online tool hosted on PreventionWeb (www.preventionweb.net) to capture information on progress in implementing the five priority areas of the Framework. During the reporting period, a guidance note entitled "A practical guide to national HFA monitoring and review through a multi-stakeholder engagement process 2011-2013" was made available. The review process is a tool for self-assessment and benchmarking and a planning tool for national Governments. At the regional and subregional levels, the Regional HFA Monitor is an online tool introduced in 2010 to improve understanding of transboundary issues concerning disaster risk reduction and identify gaps and challenges. There are now 11 intergovernmental organizations participating in the subregional Hyogo Framework for Action progress review. The Local Government Self-Assessment Tool was piloted in 2011 and seeks to gather information at the local or municipal level. These tools enable all stakeholders to be a part of the process and ensure a degree of accountability and transparency. They enable everyone from policymakers to community leaders to track progress and identify gaps.

29. Disaster risk information plays a critical role in guiding investment decisions and supporting public opinion. In order to increase access to global risk data, the Strategy secretariat produces the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*[7] in collaboration with a wide range of partners. The *Global Assessment Report* is now established as a credible global source for the analysis of hazard risks and vulnerability trends and of progress in disaster risk reduction. A total of 30 national and regional launches of the *2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction* were supported by the Strategy secretariat.

30. In response to the discussion and analysis of how private investment is a driver of disaster risk and how the resulting disaster impacts negatively affect not only the businesses themselves but also the economies and societies from which they operate, the *2013 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction* will include the incentives and disincentives for managing disaster risks in investment decisions, particularly in the current context of global political and economic crises, concatenated risks and uncertainty. The relationship between private investment and disaster risk works in both directions: private investment can be negatively affected by disasters, but it can also generate or increase disaster risks. The *2013 Global Assessment Report* will be launched at the fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in 2013.

31. An independent evaluation[9] of PreventionWeb was undertaken to assess its effectiveness, impact and ability to meet the current and evolving information needs of existing and potential disaster risk reduction stakeholders. The evaluation found that PreventionWeb had established itself as the repository for information on disaster risk reduction globally. It provides a comprehensive range of resources for a broad user constituency. With more than 25,000 disaster risk professionals visiting the website weekly, the Strategy secretariat is committed to strengthening this globally important store of knowledge for the disaster risk reduction community.

32. The role of public-private partnerships in the area of risk monitoring continues to gain strength. The Global Earthquake Model (www.globalquakemodel.org) is a collaborative effort to develop and deploy tools and resources for earthquake risk assessment worldwide. Similarly, the Financial Impact of Global Shocks, a multi-year initiative of the World Economic Forum, focuses on the economic and humanitarian risks posed by natural hazards and provides a unique global reference for actions and best practices that public and private sector stakeholders can leverage.

**Advocating for disaster-resilient cities, schools and hospitals**

33. The importance of disaster risk awareness in making the difference between life and death was once again highlighted during the earthquake in eastern Japan. In general, people who are aware of their risks and know what to do are more likely to survive in a disaster. The role of global, national and local leaders in advocating for disaster risk reduction is crucial. In this regard, the Strategy secretariat has increased its engagement with a number of agents of change, such as parliamentarians, mayors, local and national leaders and young people, in order to promote a culture of disaster risk reduction in all sectors of society. Education, in particular, plays an important role in shaping the attitudes of young citizens and bringing disaster risk knowledge to homes and communities.

34. An estimated 100 million children and young people are affected by disasters every year. The challenge for most countries is to build students' understanding of the causes, nature and effects of hazards through educational programmes while also fostering a range of competencies and skills to enable them to contribute proactively to the prevention and mitigation of disasters. Knowledge and skills must be informed by a framework of attitudes, dispositions and values that propel young people to act responsibly and responsively when their families and communities are threatened.[10]

35. The One Million Safe Schools and Hospitals initiative, through which the Strategy secretariat works with communities, civil society organizations, Governments and the private sector to make schools and hospitals safe from disasters, has received over 200,000 pledges for safety.

36. The momentum on the implementation of the safer hospitals initiatives continues to build, particularly in Arab States and countries in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. The revision of the key hospital safety assessment tool,

[9] See www.preventionweb.net/files/27624_pwevalfinalreportwithannexes.pdf.

[10] David Selby and Fumiyo Kagawa, *Disaster Risk Reduction in School Curricula: Case Studies from Thirty Countries* (Geneva and Paris, United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012).

the Hospital Safety Index, was initiated by the World Health Organization and involves experts in structural and non-structural safety and preparedness from all over the world.

37. The role of parliamentarians is crucial in setting State policy and norms, oversight, legislation and the creation of an enabling environment for risk reduction. The Strategy secretariat has engaged with more than 900 parliamentarians from 124 countries, increasing their knowledge of and access to information on disaster risk reduction to support their work in the context of climate change and the Millennium Development Goals. In Bangladesh, disaster risk reduction and climate change have become an all-party agenda to support the Government in reducing climate risks. In Uganda, a new parliamentary network was launched in 2011 to support the efforts of the Government to reduce disaster risk and build resilience. At the regional level, disaster risk reduction and climate change are now on the agenda of subregional and regional parliamentary forums and assemblies. This includes the Environment and Tourism Commission of the Latin American Parliament; the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States-European Union Joint Parliamentary Assembly; the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly; and the East African Legislative Assembly. The Strategy secretariat cooperates closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to encourage the development of national legal frameworks linking disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and poverty reduction. Some 3,000 parliamentarians have received copies of their joint publication, entitled *Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*.

38. Over the past two years, the World Disaster Reduction Campaign on the theme "Making cities resilient: my city is getting ready" has developed into a vehicle for outreach and urban commitments that is growing in relevance and impact. More than 1,050 cities and local governments from more than 85 countries have joined the campaign since its launch. Many other cities participate in the global network of cities, mayors and partner organizations committed to improving participation, urban planning, local governance and urban risk by using the checklist of 10 essentials for making cities resilient, the Local Government Self-Assessment Tool and the *Handbook for Local Government Leaders*, launched by the Strategy secretariat in 2012. City administrations and local stakeholders can use these practical tools to apply holistic and innovative solutions to the new risks created by the growing urban population and complexity of cities.

39. Local governments have started consultations on a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. Several countries, including Argentina, Indonesia, Lebanon, the Philippines and Sweden, have undertaken initiatives to promote the technical and policy tools of the campaign nationwide at the local government level. In collaboration with partners and the 29 role model cities, the Strategy secretariat facilitated city-to-city learning and the sharing of experiences among local governments to promote the replication of successful community participation, risk-aware land use planning and improved preparedness. United Cities and Local Governments, CITYNET and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability have adopted the campaign and the goal of urban resilience. The World Health Organization has initiated the development of guidance to countries and cities on urban health emergency risk management through the World Health Organization Centre for Health Development, based in Kobe, Japan, while the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative developed a training package on advancing disaster risk reduction in urban settings for mayors and other local authorities. In support of

the campaign, the World Bank launched *Cities and Flooding: A Guide to Integrated Urban Flood Risk Management for the 21st Century* with the Strategy secretariat and the World Meteorological Organization and supported the development of the campaign tools.

40. On the International Day for Disaster Reduction, 13 October 2011, the Strategy secretariat and its partners invited children and young people to "step up for disaster risk reduction". It is estimated that every year 100 million young people are affected by disasters and thousands are killed and injured. Young people, such as scouts in Haiti, Red Crescent youth volunteers in Bangladesh and schoolchildren in Japan, are also at the centre of preparedness and response. There is ample evidence that wherever young people are supported and empowered with information and skills training, they are important actors in disaster risk reduction and have a keen eye for the areas in their community where risk can be reduced. The International Day was marked by more than 100 events in 80 countries, including an "adopt a tree" project involving schoolchildren in Kenya, earthquake simulations in Greece and a disaster risk reduction fair in the Dominican Republic. The theme of the International Day for Disaster Reduction in 2012 will be "Women and girls: the [in]visible force of resilience".

## B. Strengthening regional level coordination

### Africa

41. The African economy has shown substantial growth since 2000. While the rate of return on foreign investments today is higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other developing region, human development is the lowest globally and vulnerability to disasters is increasing. Drought, floods and cross-border conflict are the major challenges to disaster risk management. The upside is that Africa has shown political commitment by adopting and supporting the implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2006-2015) and the Programme of Action for its implementation.

42. Current efforts are focused on increasing the influence of regional institutions, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. While donors continue to fund humanitarian interventions, longer-term solutions based on sound disaster management practices often appear elusive. While hurdles remain, however, progress is evident. The African Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction is actively addressing the gap between climate scientists and policymakers by combining their efforts in order to improve early warning and increase weather and climate products for disaster risk practitioners.

43. The Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will be held late in February 2013 back to back with the Africa Drought Adaptation Forum. The Regional Platform will address recommendations arising from the Declaration of the Second African Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction that were adopted at the Seventeenth African Union Summit, in 2011, on a financial mechanism for disaster risk reduction and increased investment in disaster reduction in the region.

**Arab States**

44. The Arab region continues to live through a wave of social and political change that is affecting governance and institutional structures, as well as the development and risk reduction agenda. Despite competing political and social priorities, the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 was adopted at the League of Arab States summit, held in Baghdad in March 2012, underscoring the political commitment and awareness of disaster risk reduction across the region. Efforts are now focused on the development of a framework to implement the Arab Strategy. Building technical capacity and enhancing knowledge and information systems are key priorities for the region.

45. The Gulf Cooperation Council's disaster management centre is enhancing subregional capacities and is focused on identifying the gaps and challenges facing Gulf States in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction.

46. The Arab Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is planned for late 2012 or early 2013.

**Asia and the Pacific**

47. As Asian economies continues to grow rapidly, so does economic risk exposure to natural hazards. Disaster losses across the region amounted to $294 billion, or 75 per cent of the world's total economic losses, underscoring the high levels of exposure in Asia. Notwithstanding this increasing disaster exposure, many countries in the region have made considerable progress in reducing their vulnerability. Political commitment to addressing disaster risk is high across the region at both the national and local levels.

48. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-United Nations Strategic Plan of Cooperation on Disaster Management, consistent with the resolutions of the General Assembly on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, has been completed and will guide ASEAN-United Nations cooperation in disaster management in the region for 2011-2015.

49. The fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in October 2012 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The Conference aims to increase political commitment and investment for local action in disaster risk reduction and establish a practical and collaborative mechanism for building resilience at the local level. At the subregional level, Pacific States and territories will hold the Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management in October 2012 in Nouméa, New Caledonia, to harmonize existing regional mechanisms for disaster risk management and climate change and support the implementation of regional policies and frameworks.

**Europe**

50. The continuing financial crisis across Europe has highlighted the economic benefits of prevention. As the risk of economic loss is now growing faster than the average GDP growth of European States, there has been a clear trend towards defining action to increase prevention investments by better understanding risks and integrating risk reduction across different sectors.

51. The second annual meeting of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction focused on climate change adaptation, knowledge-sharing and the

promotion of citizens' awareness of disaster risk reduction. A key outcome of the meeting was the review of European countries' inclusion of disaster risk reduction in their climate change adaptation plans and policy. Strong European engagement in risk reduction and the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action has underpinned a desire to consult on a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

52. At the third meeting of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in October 2012 in Dubrovnik, Croatia, the implementation of the outcomes of the second meeting will be reviewed.

**The Americas**

53. Population growth in the Americas is higher than the global average and continues to exert pressure on dynamic factors that increase people's exposure to natural hazards and creates conditions of vulnerability. This situation affects mid-size cities in particular. As most countries in the region reach middle-income levels and official development assistance (ODA) received decreases, competition for public resources among different sectors represents an opportunity to prioritize disaster risk reduction investments as a key aspect of sustainable development.

54. In the Americas, subregional organizations have played a critical role as active advocates for the adoption of policy commitments to advance disaster risk reduction through various mechanisms for cooperation. These mechanisms have been catalytic in the development of subregional plans and have influenced the development of new legislation, the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in national policies and the monitoring of regional advances in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

55. The third session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, to be held in October 2012 in Buenos Aires, aims to contribute to the commitments made at the second session of the Regional Platform and address the challenges faced by national Governments and local communities.

## C. Strengthening national level coordination

56. A review of national platforms and relevant national coordination mechanisms is currently under way and is expected to provide concrete recommendations to further strengthen national coordination capacities for disaster risk reduction. The regular use of the HFA Monitor by 133 countries to assess their progress has resulted in the accumulation of a valuable knowledge base on disaster risk reduction at the national level. The Strategy secretariat is currently finalizing a consolidated report of three cycles of reporting by countries on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

57. In support of country-level programming, the United Nations Development Group held a series of regional workshops for 40 United Nations country teams, during which integrated approaches to integrating disaster risk reduction, environmental sustainability and climate change within country programmes were explored. A roster of disaster risk reduction experts was launched, providing United Nations country teams with a pool of staff across the United Nations system able to support country programming. The impact of these targeted interventions is, in part,

illustrated in the integration of disaster risk reduction, to varying degrees, in all 25 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks[11] and one subregional programme document[12] that came into effect in 2012.

58. The United Nations Development Programme works in 60 high-risk countries on disaster risk reduction and recovery. Over the past five years, the average disaster risk reduction and recovery expenditure has been $150 million per year, of which more than 90 per cent has gone directly to national programmes. This figure is expected to double in the next five years. World Bank investments in country-level disaster risk reduction, through the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery, have increased from $0.6 million in fiscal year 2007 to $35.3 million in 2012.

## IV. Increasing investments for disaster risk reduction

59. As highlighted in a recent study of the Geneva Association on insurance economics,[13] economic losses in 2011 were unprecedented and set a new record for insured economic losses of at least $105 billion. This is part of a trend of extreme disaster events becoming more costly. The disaster that occurred in Japan in March 2011 has demonstrated how vulnerable societies and economies are in the face of geophysical events, which have received less attention in recent years as the main focus has been on climate change. The earthquake that occurred in eastern Japan was also the first "natural" disaster leading to long-term policy changes in several countries far away from the affected region, such as the nuclear phase-out in Germany and Switzerland and the cancellation of all plans to build nuclear power plants in Italy.

60. Investments in disaster risk reduction by both national Governments and the international community are an effective means of protecting people and critical social infrastructure. Since the turn of the century, more than 2.2 billion people have been affected by natural hazards worldwide and economic losses have totalled almost $1 trillion, and yet independent research published in March 2012[14] found that less than 1 per cent of all ODA is invested in reducing disaster risk in countries most affected by disasters, including those with over half of the people affected by disasters worldwide and almost 80 per cent of the deaths. The lion's share of ODA funding for disaster risk reduction has gone into major infrastructure projects in just two countries. It is also evident that much disaster risk reduction funding is for operational preparedness rather than for building long-term resilience. The Strategy secretariat, working with Member States and the Development Assistance

[11] For Albania, Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Guyana, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Sao Tome and Principe, Suriname, Thailand, Ukraine, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

[12] For Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

[13] Christophe Courbage and Walter R. Stahel, eds, "Extreme events and insurance: 2011 annus horribilis", The Geneva Reports: Risk and Insurance Research, No. 5 (Geneva, The Geneva Association, 2012).

[14] Jan Kellett and Dan Sparks, "Disaster risk reduction: spending where it should count", Briefing paper (Wells, Somerset, Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2012). Available from www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/report/disaster-risk-reduction-spending-where-it-should-count.

Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, is developing tools to track spending by national Governments and the international community, with the aim of stimulating greater investment in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

61. Disaster risk reduction was recognized as a key development issue at the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Republic of Korea. The outcome document reflected the need to ensure that development strategies and programmes prioritize the building of resilience among people and societies at risk from shocks, especially in highly vulnerable settings, such as small island developing States, and stated that investing in resilience and risk reduction increased the value and sustainability of development efforts. I welcome this commitment, which needs to be translated into action by Member States. The United Nations system will fully support their efforts.

62. The positioning of disaster risk management as a key topic of the agenda of the Group of 20 for 2012 is an important development. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery supported the Mexican Presidency of the Group of 20 to sensitize the Governments to the fiscal impact of disasters. The Group of 20 Summit held in Los Cabos, Mexico, in June 2012 resulted in a joint declaration in which the leaders of the Group of 20 recognized the value of disaster risk management tools and strategies to better prevent disasters, protect populations and assets and financially manage the economic impact of the disasters. They also recognized the combined efforts of the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations. A report on mitigating the financial impact of disasters, entitled "Improving the assessment of disaster risks to strengthen financial resilience" was published by the Government of Mexico and the World Bank as the first deliverable under the Group of 20 disaster risk management agenda.

**Funding of the Strategy secretariat**

63. Taking into account the need to continue advocacy and apply the practice of disaster risk reduction in the Millennium Development Goals and their successor and the processes associated with the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Strategy secretariat launched its strategic framework 2025[15] to realize its vision of a world where the social, political and economic imperatives for reducing disaster risk are acted on. The framework sets the Strategy secretariat's direction and outlines outcomes and targets until 2015. The Strategy secretariat's results-based management system will further enhance its ability to capture and communicate the impact of its advocacy, leadership and knowledge generation in support of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

64. In 2011, the General Assembly approved my proposal to include a Chief of Branch, Regional Programme and Policy Development, at the D-1 level in the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. The Chief of Branch will lead the planning and programming of the Strategy secretariat's regional work. I thank Member States for supporting this proposal and for thus recognizing the central importance to the United Nations of supporting States in reducing disaster losses.

[15] Available from www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/23291.

65. The Strategy secretariat has projected that its funding requirement target for the 2012-2013 biennium is $64.9 million. Funding from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery to the Strategy secretariat will cease at the end of 2013, creating a significant gap in the resources that have thus far allowed the development of the secretariat's regional capacity for cooperation on disaster risk reduction. The grant has been critical in cementing the partnership between the World Bank and the Strategy secretariat and in supporting global advocacy, knowledge building and regional coordination of disaster risk reduction.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

66. The nature of risk and risk patterns is changing, owing to climate variability and development practices. The concentration of people and economic, social and cultural assets in disaster-prone areas continues. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, has pointed to the need to change unsustainable development patterns, invest in disaster risk reduction at all levels and ensure the integration of disaster risk reduction in future frameworks on sustainable development.

67. As work towards the definition of a post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework progresses, it is critical that Member States take stock of their experience and lessons learned in managing disaster risk and integrating disaster risk reduction into policies and plans for development and share them at the 2013 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. In this context, it is important to report on the implementation of the deliberations and commitments made at the previous sessions of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, in particular those concerning the assessment and safety of schools and hospitals and the conduct of multi-hazard risk assessments, as well as disaster risk reduction financing, namely the commitment to provide the equivalent of 10 per cent of humanitarian relief funds, 10 per cent of post-disaster reconstruction and recovery projects and national preparedness and response plans and 1 per cent of all national development funding and development assistance funding.

68. The fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2013 represents a unique opportunity for Member States and all other stakeholders, including the private sector, to share the lessons learned and contribute to shaping the content of the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework. As such, I invite countries to participate with senior-level representation from various sectors, in particular from planning and finance, as well as from the private sector, the sciences and civil society.

69. The lessons learned through such stocktaking will also be of strategic use during the discussions on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, including the definition of the sustainable development goals. In this context, it is important that the vision of how to manage disaster risk be coherently represented through all relevant sustainable development forums and processes and that, to this end, Member States develop coherent approaches built on accumulated practices and experience.

70. The next two years offer important opportunities to agree on practical approaches to addressing the challenges posed by climate variability and unsustainable development practices, which are vulnerable to natural hazards. The

work and cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action has already generated a significant body of practice and experience from which some clear principles are emerging. The work for the development of a post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework and the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction set the stage for transforming such accumulated experience and knowledge into new risk management paradigms.

71. In this respect, I have requested the Strategy secretariat, in its role as the United Nations system focal point for disaster risk reduction, to work with Japan, the host country, and to lead the preparations for that very important event.

72. **In the light of the above, I recommend that:**

(a) **Through national cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder consultations, including local actors, Member States take stock of the lessons from managing disaster risk and securing development planning and investments and share those lessons at the fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2013;**

(b) **Member States, through the above-mentioned consultations, prepare to share at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2013 their progress on the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the sessions of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in 2007, 2009 and 2011, as outlined in the respective Chair's summaries;**

(c) **Member States actively engage in the consultation process for the development of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, to be facilitated by the Strategy secretariat in accordance with General Assembly resolution 66/199;**

(d) **Member States establish and further develop national disaster loss databases, disaster risk mapping and financial tracking systems in order to support decision-making across all levels of Government, and that they make full use of the HFA Monitor in order to support the assessment of progress made in disaster risk reduction.**

73. **In addition, I urge that:**

(a) **Member States ensure that future frameworks and deliberations concerning sustainable development, including those at the regional level, be based on practical and sound disaster risk reduction considerations, drawn, inter alia, from the proposed national stocktaking exercises;**

(b) **Member States ensure resources to and support for the further strengthening of the Strategy secretariat so that the latter can meet the challenges of the coming work on sustainable development and the development of the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework.**

# Annex

## Update on international cooperation to reduce the impact of El Niño/La Niña

1. The International Research Centre on El Niño, in Guayaquil, Ecuador, continues to be a reference centre on climate services and climate-related disaster risk reduction in the Andean region — the western coast of South America — and globally. Its main contributions are in the area of climate research, including support to applied studies through data collection and contributions to the periodic El Niño/La Niña updates coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization.

2. The Centre has developed a number of tools, including applied research in climate change and vulnerability assessments in highlands, coastal zones and marine-protected and urban areas. In support of its applied research efforts, the Centre coordinates three regional working groups on seasonal forecasts, hydrological outlooks and extreme events and climate indices. During the reporting period, training was provided to more than 250 professionals in the Americas on climate analysis, climate risk management, ocean modelling, hydrological outlooks, extreme events analysis and climate adaptation.

3. Collaboration continues to be an important focus of the Centre's work. It has established working relations with the International Research Institute for Climate and Society, the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research, the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development, the Meteorological Research Institute (Japan), Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Spain), EUROCLIMA, the climate change regional cooperation programme of the European Commission, and national and regional organizations across the Americas.

4. As the Centre approaches a decade in operation, only two Member States — Ecuador and Spain — have provided funding.

United Nations A/67/336

General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 August 2012

Original: English

**Sixty-seventh session**
Item 15 of the provisional agenda*
**Culture of peace**

## Letter dated 16 August 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, Jorge Sampaio, has submitted to me his fifth annual report highlighting the main activities carried out from July 2011 to July 2012 in accordance with the third implementation plan (2011-2013) and the addendum thereto, which set out the agenda of the Alliance for the period covered and defined concrete initiatives to be carried out.

The Alliance of Civilizations was established in 2005 under the auspices of the United Nations, at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey. Its aim is to promote the agenda of good governance of cultural diversity at both the global and local levels and to help counter divisions, polarization and extremism within and among societies.

Now in its fifth year of operation, the Alliance is the leading initiative dealing with the polarization, transitions and dilemmas of our current time. Its relevance is further underscored by recent events and headlines. At the end of a decade of great challenges, I remain convinced of the usefulness of the innovative work carried out by the Alliance as a platform to bring together a unique constellation of partners at all levels, committed to harnessing the resources of cultural diversity for peace and development.

The international community continues to provide the Alliance with broad political support, and the Alliance's Group of Friends now numbers 133 members. By its resolution 64/14 of 10 November 2009, the General Assembly expressed its support for the Alliance. I look forward to more countries joining the Group of Friends and actively supporting the Alliance, including financially. In this regard, I should like to underscore the importance of the replenishment mechanism which now complements the voluntary Trust Fund of the Alliance. I trust it will offer a further platform for sustained, diversified and regular support for the initiatives of the Alliance.

I also note that good progress has been made in planning for the Vienna Forum, to be hosted by the Government of Austria on 27 and 28 February 2013,

* A/67/150.



Please recycle

which is expected to raise the visibility of the Alliance and enhance political commitment to its goals. I am pleased that the Vienna Forum will focus mainly on the theme "Responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue", one of the key topics of our time for many different reasons. I look forward to taking part in the Forum.

I should be grateful if you would bring the report to the attention of the members of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

# Alliance of Civilizations: fifth annual report of the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations

*Summary*

The present report highlights the main activities carried out by the High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations and his secretariat from July 2011 to July 2012. The activities were developed in accordance with the third implementation plan for 2011-2013 submitted to the Secretary-General in August 2011, as well as its addendum, taking stock of the outcomes of the Fourth Global Forum, held in Qatar in December 2011. Both plans are aimed at implementing, in a changing world, the recommendations proposed in the founding report of the High-level Group on the Alliance of Civilizations.

## Contents

| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 4 |
| II. | Overview of progress | 4 |
| III. | Consolidating the Alliance of Civilizations as a global multi-stakeholder platform | 7 |
| IV. | Main initiatives and activities | 10 |
| | A. National plans and regional strategies | 10 |
| | B. Multi-stakeholder initiatives, including projects and programmes led mainly by the Alliance of Civilizations | 11 |
| | C. Other cross-cutting initiatives | 17 |
| V. | The Fourth Global Forum, Doha, December 2011 | 19 |
| VI. | Outreach | 20 |
| VII. | Governance: replenishment mechanism for the Trust Fund and the secretariat | 20 |
| VIII. | Conclusions | 21 |

# I. Introduction

1. The Alliance of Civilizations is a political initiative of the Secretary-General. It was launched in 2005 with the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey. Based on the recommendations of a report submitted by a High-level Group in November 2006,[1] the Secretary-General appointed Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, as his High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. Since May 2007, President Sampaio has been in charge of achieving the Alliance's mission by setting up a functional framework for action, developing an agenda and building up a network of stakeholders.

2. Tolerance and respect among human beings in all diversities of belief, culture and language are fundamental values at the core of the Alliance. The Alliance aspires to the ideal of a culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations on the assumption that, as stated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2), "Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity."

3. The primary mission of the Alliance is to forge collective political will and to mobilize concerted action at the institutional and civil-society levels aimed at improving understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions and, in the process, help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. The Alliance's particular focus is on improving relations within and among the so-called Western and Muslim societies, and on addressing persistent tensions and divides.

4. The Alliance occupies a unique niche within the United Nations family. It is an innovative, flexible, results-oriented initiative based on partnerships and commitments to action made by a wide range of stakeholders.

5. During the reporting period, a new step forward was taken to consolidate the Alliance's sustainability, independence, autonomy and credibility as a multi-stakeholder initiative through the implementation of a new replenishment mechanism and the creation of a Partners Assembly made up of a diverse range of donors.

6. The present report is the High Representative's fifth annual report. It highlights the main activities carried out from July 2011 to July 2012, in accordance with the third implementation plan (2011-2013), complemented by the major outcomes of the Fourth Global Forum in Doha in December 2011 (which are integrated into an addendum to the third implementation plan, presented in March 2012).

# II. Overview of progress

7. During the past year, the Alliance continued to consolidate and expand as one of the most relevant global platforms for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation. It delivered on its objectives through a range of activities, including

[1] *Alliance of Civilizations: Report of the High-level Group*, 13 November 2006 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.I.11).

several cross-cutting projects, which are presented in section IV. The present section puts them into perspective, discussing progress made over the past year against the backdrop of a changing world marked by increasingly demanding challenges related to the Alliance's vision and mission.

8. As a political initiative addressing sensitive questions at the juncture of domestic concerns, national interests, regional balances and world politics, the Alliance is progressing amid a number of challenges, dilemmas and shortcomings.

9. The year 2011 marked the tenth anniversary of the events of 11 September 2001. Surveys show that Muslim and Western publics continue to see relations between them as generally bad, and both sides hold negative stereotypes of the other. Surveys also show that tensions and mistrust still dominate West-Muslim relations.

10. Events and controversies related to racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, including discrimination against persons based on their religion or belief and incitement to hate, persist in many parts of the world and were prominent in mainstream media during the reporting period.

11. Together, those two sets of facts make it clear that the primary mission of the Alliance and its particular focus must be given equal priority in its activities, and be preserved as the two main defining features of the Alliance.

12. Actions carried out during the reporting period aimed at striking the right balance between the two dimensions of the Alliance and to overcome what in the third implementation plan is identified as the coherence challenge. Efforts were made through the year to foster stronger links between national plans, regional strategies and programmes developed by the Alliance, set up with or through its partners. That was reflected in preparatory work for the Second Action Plan for South-Eastern Europe and the draft Latin America Strategy. Furthermore, extra efforts were made to expand and anchor the Alliance's work in new regions, namely in Asia and Africa. Cross-cutting activities, including various multi-stakeholder initiatives, public campaigns and the Intercultural Innovation Awards, helped create synergies and exploit untapped resources.

13. Because 2011 was a historic year for the Middle East and North Africa region as social and political transformations in many countries created unprecedented opportunities for change, the Alliance was involved in a number of activities, largely within the framework of its Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean. Conferences in Cairo in July 2011 and the annual Lisbon Forum co-organized with the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in November 2011 focused on sharing experiences in democratic transition and addressed a number of critical issues. Media owners, who convened at the Dead Sea in Jordan in October 2011, reviewed risks and agreed on responsibilities. The Doha Forum discussed with key actors the transforming role of youth, and both the power and the limits of social networks. Democratically elected governments face defining issues of securing political participation, tolerance and realization of universal human rights, including religious freedom and freedom of expression. Sharing experiences from different environments remains high on the agenda.

14. One important role for the Alliance amid increasingly global diversity, multiple emerging versions of modernity and a much more politically diverse landscape is to promote dialogue and pluralism to encourage consensus at global,

regional, national and local levels. In the international and regional arena, that means understanding that democratization does not necessarily signify Westernization and that, as is already being witnessed in the Middle East, more democracy may well mean more political Islam. At the same time, in a democracy, respect for human rights, pluralism and the toleration of political and ideological diversity are non-negotiable.

15. In this new context, the Alliance is increasingly focused on the influence of religion on peace, security and development. Building on the outcomes and recommendations of previous initiatives on freedom of expression, religion and conscience, religious diversity, religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2010; Cordoba, Spain, 2010; Lisbon, 2010; Florence, Italy, 2011), as well as on several recommendations on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial and religious hatred, the Alliance addressed topical issues at the Doha Forum, such as the need for education on tolerance, intercultural skills and competence; new tools for building consensus and making cultural diversity an asset; and rising restrictions of the freedom of religion and the protection of minorities. The issue of respect for religious diversity will again be on the agenda of the Fifth Forum in Vienna in 2013. Notably, the Alliance also contributed to the success of the second observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week, celebrated in February 2012.

16. In 2011, the world continued to experience instability due to the enduring economic crisis. Economic uncertainty helped generate social and political unrest of varying degrees in many urban areas. Protests in numerous North American and Western European cities have been largely peaceful. But clashes — and, in places, civil war — have broken out in other regions and tensions have arisen in many parts of the world.

17. As a result of the economic downturn on the continent, European societies are facing persistent difficulties in addressing their growing cultural diversity. The success of many far-right anti-immigration parties in various elections is a clear symptom of a growing unease. Fears and prejudices may escalate to a social crisis across Europe if not properly addressed. A new initiative entitled "Reconciling diversity and cohesion in Europe: a human rights model to build inclusive and participatory societies in Europe" was launched on 15 November 2011 in Paris. In consultation with civil society, it will be further developed in the coming months.

18. Efforts to strengthen the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations as a United Nations soft-power tool for dialogue and peace continued through closer cooperation with non-State actors. That included special relations with the media community through the Global Experts platform, a network of non-governmental organizations, a growing number of corporations and foundations, representatives of religions and faith-based initiatives affiliated with the United Nations, and youth. The challenge is to bring that capacity and many relevant programmes closer to the places and issues to which they matter most.

19. Looking towards the future at the ongoing shifting global balance of power, it is evident that the Alliance should be able to contribute more to raise awareness about what it means to live in a landscape of differences and the necessary role of cross-cultural dialogue and exchange.

20. The expectation regarding an increased role by the Alliance as a United Nations soft-power tool was expressed at the General Assembly thematic debate on the theme "Fostering cross-cultural understanding for building peaceful and inclusive societies" on 22 March 2012, and included a new demand for a mediation role for the Alliance.

21. Also, at the Alliance's Doha Forum, which focused on the topic of culture, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue to foster sustainable development, a new range of demands related to the poverty-reduction agenda emerged.

22. As reflected in the third implementation plan, ensuring unity of purpose, coherence and consistency of action remains a considerable challenge for the Alliance and requires further thinking about what might be the most likely scenarios for its future development.

23. The sustainability issue was addressed during the reporting period. Acting on proposals by the High Representative, Turkey hosted a pledging conference — also known as the Partners Forum — from 31 May to 1 June 2012 in Istanbul, co-chaired by the Secretary-General, at which State and other non-State partners pledged $7.5 million.

24. Further consolidating and fully developing the new replenishment mechanism remains a main challenge for the near future. A reappraisal of priorities may be warranted, which would further underscore the matchmaking nature of the Alliance.

25. The important contribution of the Doha Forum must be highlighted. Generously hosted by Qatar, the Forum stood at the intersection of the development agenda and the Alliance's mission. It put on the table the notion of a new social contract that binds institutional and civil-society actors at the national and global levels, beyond and with their precious diversity. That broadening of perspectives will help the international community prepare for a post-2015 agenda. In addition, the Forum helped build support for existing programmes and new ideas, as is illustrated throughout the present report.

26. Preparations for the Fifth Forum in Vienna (27 and 28 February 2013) are under way as of early 2012. The Forum's overarching theme will be the promotion of responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue.

27. Against this general background, the present report provides specific updates on the Alliance community, its main activities and programmes, the Trust Fund and the outreach challenge.

## III. Consolidating the Alliance of Civilizations as a global multi-stakeholder platform

28. The Alliance has a strong intergovernmental dimension, reflected in the Group of Friends. Yet it operates in a field in which progress depends on the contributions and choices of a great diversity of actors from all walks of life. It actively seeks to involve them in a vast platform of a wide range of stakeholders, which has now been set up as a Partners Assembly. The points below may be highlighted.

### Group of Friends

29. After the fast and steady expansion of previous years, membership continues to grow more slowly, bringing the number of Group of Friends members to 133 (110 countries and 23 international organizations).[2]

30. The Group of Friends held its ministerial meeting in New York in September 2011, with the participation of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly. It met at the level of Permanent Representatives in March 2012. Ministers and heads of international organizations or their representatives also met in five thematic round tables during the Doha Forum, providing guidance on key issues. Consultations also occurred through written communications and a wide range of bilateral contacts. Group of Friends members were notably invited to contribute suggestions for the third implementation plan (2011-2013), the agenda of the Doha Forum and the outline of the new replenishment mechanism.

31. The High Representative had a steady flow of contacts with several Group members, notably in the framework of the preparation of the first pledging conference. He held bilateral consultations with both sponsors (Istanbul in January 2012 and Madrid in March 2012) and paid official visits to Australia, Finland, Jordan, Montenegro, and Serbia.

32. The period was also marked by contacts with heads of international and regional organizations to strengthen synergies and secure the implementation of memorandums of understanding, as well as closer contacts with a number of foundations and the private sector.

### Focal points

33. Members of the Group of Friends are invited to appoint focal points mandated to oversee implementation of the Alliance's goals at the national level, notably through national plans, and coordinate with the secretariat. By 30 June 2012, 79 countries and 22 international organizations had appointed focal points.

34. The Alliance ensured coordination of their efforts and exchanges by organizing the focal points' annual meeting at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Portugal back-to-back with the Lisbon Forum co-organized with the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, and also by holding regular consultations. Focal points were further involved in various meetings focused on the elaboration of the Second Action Plan for the South-Eastern Europe Regional Strategy, held in Belgrade on 10 April 2012, as well as on the framework of the Regional Strategy for Latin America held in Lima. Regular consultations among them were also informally developed on a regional basis during the past 12 months.

### Thematic platform

35. Based on a Swiss proposal, work continued to develop through thematic platforms, bringing together small groups of countries interested in further exploring specific themes and putting forward proposals for concerted action. That was mainly the case for a "humanitarian" platform, seeking to better understand and improve

[2] The following members joined the Group of Friends during the past 12 months: Brunei Darussalam, Iraq, Mongolia, the Union for the Mediterranean and the World Tourism Organization.

interaction between organizations of different faiths, as well as between secular and faith-inspired organizations in the field of humanitarian and development assistance. A survey of practices was made with about 100 non-governmental organizations. Findings were shared and discussed with them and the participating countries. Due to difficulties faced in generating enough support, however, it was decided to put this kind of approach on hold.

**Civil-society component, including the private sector and philanthropies**

36. The Alliance is a multi-stakeholder initiative. Its success depends on advocacy expertise, support and involvement of multiple actors at all levels. The Alliance constantly seeks to improve ways in which non-State actors can be better integrated into its activities, alongside and in cooperation with State actors.

37. Efforts were scaled up in order to build and/or consolidate networks targeting specific groups — youth, universities and researchers, think tanks and foundations, non-governmental organizations dealing with a range of cross-cultural issues, interfaith networks — and to set up partnerships involving the private sector.

38. Simultaneously, a search for integrated platforms continued. Following the first pre-forum organized in Qatar in May 2011, efforts to develop Alliance civil-society chapters at the regional and country level are ongoing. Civil-society initiatives and suggestions developed recently in Australia, Cameroon, China and India point in that direction.

39. Efforts were started to encourage the engagement of individuals in Alliance activism through campaigns, competitions and initiatives that call on personal participation. The Doha Forum promoted the concept of commitment to action, also applicable to individuals.

40. Public-private partnerships are playing an increasingly important role. They form the basis of concrete projects with a global dimension such as Dialogue Café, the Intercultural Innovation Award, summer schools and the "Do one thing for diversity and inclusion" campaign, all described in sections IV and V below.

41. The Alliance continued to collaborate closely with countries, agencies and non-governmental organizations, working on issues of interfaith dialogue and faith-based cooperation with a view to building on complementarities. That work included, in particular, engaging with the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and the Jordanian initiative for a World Interfaith Harmony Week. Contacts will now also be developed with the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, set up in Vienna in November 2011.

**Partners Assembly**

42. As part of the new replenishment mechanism, a Partners Assembly was set up with a diverse funding base made up of Governments, international organizations, foundations, corporations and individuals. The Partners Assembly will provide a framework where all types of donors can exchange views on the operations and effectiveness of the Alliance's Trust Fund when considering their future contributions. The Partners Assembly will also be consulted about the priorities and the strategic outlook of the Alliance, and will have the opportunity to make suggestions for new initiatives. The High Representative will expect to meet the

Partners Assembly as a whole on the occasion of the replenishment sessions and whenever required.

# IV. Main initiatives and activities

43. During the reporting period, the Alliance developed its main activities in the fields of education, youth, media and migration around the following five key objectives: (a) facilitating global conversation on challenges and opportunities for living at ease in a landscape of diversities in our age of global communication and exchanges; (b) promoting changes in policy frameworks and intercultural strategies; (c) preventing intercultural tensions and crises, combating stereotypes, discrimination and xenophobia; (d) supporting innovative grass-roots initiatives that contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding, mutual respect and cooperation across divides; and (e) raising awareness and mobilizing public support for cultural diversity, tolerance and inclusion. During the reporting period, a range of programmes and events were implemented. The most relevant initiatives are listed below.

## A. National plans and regional strategies

44. National plans are the best process for taking ownership of the Alliance's goals at the country level. As at 30 June 2012, 27 States had adopted national plans and strategies: Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Italy, Kuwait, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Some countries have issued second and third editions of national plans.

45. More plans are in preparation as part of a long-term gradual exercise to be carried out by countries at their own pace, using their own implementation channels. While not aiming at full-fledged plans, some countries develop important sets of measures on critical issues.

46. While the plans cannot be devised according to a single model, it is increasingly accepted that they express added ownership of the Alliance's goals and that in the long term they should include core measures and practices that represent minimum standards of good governance of cultural diversity. Cross-fertilization with the range of the Alliance's programmes would be an obvious advantage and would strengthen overall coherence.

47. The secretariat will need to find the necessary resources for more steady support for countries developing such plans and exchanges of experiences, but will also, critically, need to encourage countries in greater need of such measures to start on their plans with the involvement of civil society. It may also help such countries mobilize the expertise of international and regional organizations and draw on networks of experts.

**Regional strategies**

48. The Alliance has been calling on groups of countries facing common challenges to generate common actions in cooperation with civil society. That had been the case with the adoption in Sarajevo in December 2009 of a Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, followed in mid-2010 by a Plan of Action for its implementation. Similarly, work launched in Alexandria, Egypt, in early 2010 culminated in the adoption on 9 November 2010 in Valetta of a Regional Strategy on Intercultural Dialogue and Cooperation for the Mediterranean. That led to the adoption in May 2011 of a first set of prioritized actions for implementation, which reflected the new context in the Middle East and North Africa region.

49. The funding of the two Plans of Action has admittedly been a problem, which is now being addressed under the new replenishment procedure. It will be an ongoing priority. In the meantime, a few projects and activities are under way in both cases. They include a history teaching project in South-Eastern Europe with the support of the European Association of History Educators, the Council of Europe and the Soros Institute, and various forms of sharing know-how and experiences in the Mediterranean, in particular in the fields of media, youth and the democratic structures of transition.

50. A strong political will led to the proposal of a second Regional Action Plan for South-Eastern Europe. Following a meeting in Belgrade in April 2012, the Plan under finalization encompasses a wide range of projects, aimed at addressing six priorities.

51. Based on an invitation by Peru, a draft Regional Strategy for Latin America has also been worked out and awaits ministerial approval in 2012, together with a Plan of Action, which will build on work carried out by regional and subregional organizations as well as civil-society partners, and will strengthen synergies with the Alliance's programmes.

52. Other regional initiatives are under consideration. Preliminary contacts have been made with Governments and/or civil-society partners in Asia, the South Pacific region and sub-Saharan Africa. They would not necessarily lead to full-fledged plans in the short term, but would be important steps in an interactive process. In some cases, they would benefit from an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development understanding that earmarked contributions to developmentally focused projects could be reported as bilateral aid in terms of eligibility for official development assistance.

## B. Multi-stakeholder initiatives, including projects and programmes led mainly by the Alliance of Civilizations

53. A series of programmes have been developed by the Alliance and its partners in the four fields of action, in pursuit of the five broad objectives (see para. 43). They help deliver positive change for citizens in terms of respect, access and understanding in multicultural environments. They are based on suggestions contained in the High-level Group report but also on commitments made by different partners on the occasion of each Alliance Forum.

54. Many programmes reflect various forms of cooperation with partner international organizations, based on a network of memorandums of understanding

between the Alliance and the Arab League Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Council of Europe, the International Organization for Migration, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Many also include contributions from non-governmental organizations, foundations and universities, or provide an umbrella to their initiatives, under the High Representative's vision: The Alliance can deliver only if you deliver with us. You are the Alliance.

**Education field of action**

55. From the outset, the Alliance has been concerned by the widespread mutual ignorance, fear and suspicion across cultures. It recognizes the critical role of education in helping build bridges and change perspectives. It also acknowledges that, in an area of substantial existing activity, its main role is to encourage constant adaptation of existing efforts, rather than to initiate a range of new activities. The Alliance maintains an academic network, which will develop synergies with the United Nations University International Institute.

*Education about Religions and Beliefs platform*

56. The Education about Religions and Beliefs online community has become a premier Internet resource on the issues concerning learning about diverse religions and beliefs. It kept expanding during the reporting period. With a network of 18 academic and civil-society partners spanning the globe, the community has also evolved into a platform for educational activities, a facilitator of discussions on the role of faith-based organizations and a synergizing agent for the Alliance in several respects.

57. The organization in Marrakech, Morocco, in February 2012 of the International Symposium on Education, Spirituality and Education for Human Flourishing is a good illustration of the potential of the platform for well-informed debates and policy recommendations.

*Media literacy*

58. The Alliance continued to develop several media literacy initiatives to help young people and citizens navigate an increasingly complex media world and provide them with tools to become discerning and critical media users and producers, an essential condition for better mutual understanding. The Alliance has joined forces with UNESCO and further developed the Media and Literacy Clearinghouse into a global reference in the field of media education. The joint publication of the Alliance, the European Commission and UNESCO, *Mapping Media Education Policies in the World*, has been translated into Japanese by Hosei University in Tokyo.

59. The joint Alliance-UNESCO University Network on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue had its first conference in June 2011 in Fez, Morocco, establishing the framework of the Global University Chair. A second meeting took place in May 2012 at the University Autonoma of Barcelona, Spain, where the Alliance, UNESCO and eight universities (from Australia, Brazil, China, Egypt, Jamaica, Morocco, Spain and the United States of America) presented the first outputs of the network.

*Encouraging constant adaptation of education policies and backing pioneering efforts*

60. The Doha Forum provided several opportunities to explore the role of education in reducing misperceptions and allowing for constructive intercultural interactions. Workshops provided recommendations on mainstreaming the acquisition of intercultural skills, or developing new higher-education programmes to help public-service professionals manage diversity. Follow-up work is under way.

61. The Doha Forum also addressed the role of teaching history in conflict transformation, with representatives from the European Association of History Educators, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture and the Council of Europe, and ministers or senior experts from different countries with relevant experience. One of the many recommendations is that the Alliance should support pilot actions in the framework of its regional strategies, which it already does in South-Eastern Europe.

*Living together at ease in diversity: the Alliance of Civilizations' summer schools*

62. The Alliance summer schools are based on the conviction that youth are a driving force for change. In addition, a central principle behind the summer school is that people share more commonalities than divisive differences, and when given the opportunity, they will explore those common interests, sparking collaborations and stimulating ideas that address major issues around the world.

63. The objectives of the summer school are to (a) promote the empowerment of youth by strengthening intercultural skills and competencies; (b) strengthen young people's capacity to get involved in the preparation and implementation of cooperative action across divides; (c) facilitate encounters and exchanges among youth from around the world; and (d) develop a network of participants.

64. The week-long boarding summer school design is based on a process of mutual learning, using the participants' varied experiences as a starting point for training and learning processes. Active participation and in-depth reflection are key components of the course, which combines formal and informal educational opportunities. Participants compare their approaches to work and participation as young leaders in increasingly diverse societies, preparing them to become agents of change when they return to their own communities.

65. The 2011 summer school was hosted by Lisbon University as a result of a consortium of partners, namely the League of Arab States, the Euro-Mediterranean University, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, the Gulbenkian Foundation, the Aga Khan Network for Development and a range of companies. It gathered close to 100 youth aged 18 to 30, ensuring geographical, cultural and gender balances.

66. In 2012, three summer schools are planned, in Coimbra, Portugal, in August, with 135 participants from more than 60 countries; in Malta during the first week of September; and in Turkey in late September.

**Youth field of action**

67. Deeply aware that youth are agents of change and a source of innovative ideas, the Alliance recognizes them as autonomous actors and partners in building more inclusive and equitable societies. It takes steps to foster their participation, supports

their most promising initiatives and promotes exchange programmes. An expanding one-stop youth website backs the process.

68. In the context of the Doha Forum, strong youth participation was again fostered by a youth preparatory event. One of its by-products was the launch of a youth campaign calling on political leaders and citizens to speak out against fear, intolerance and xenophobia.

*Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations*

69. Further to the First Convention of the Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations, which took place in Baku in April 2011, the Alliance and the leaders of the Movement have been working throughout the year on the finalization of its charter and the terms of reference. Final steps are expected in 2013, enabling the initiative to move forward.

*Youth Solidarity Fund*

70. The Youth Solidarity Fund is an international small-grants programme which provides seed funding of up to $30,000 to youth organizations advancing intercultural and interfaith dialogue at local, national, regional or international levels. Projects funded under the programme are developed and implemented in their entirety by youth organizations.

71. As the result of the two Youth Solidarity Fund editions in 2008 and 2010, 24 projects were funded and more than 150,000 individuals, mostly youth, benefited from their activities. To assess the results and impact of project activities, as well as ensure greater sustainability of projects, the Alliance organized a three-day capacity-building training for the Youth Solidarity Fund winners in Nairobi in March 2012. One of the exciting outcomes of the training was the launch of an alumni network to provide guidance and mentorship to the future winners of the Youth Solidarity Fund beyond 2012, subject to more funds being channelled to the Trust Fund.

*Other developments*

72. The Alliance continued to take an active part in the work of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, which aims to increase the effectiveness of United Nations work in youth development. It joined a working group on drafting an action plan to deepen the youth focus of United Nations programmes, as instructed by the Secretary-General.

73. On 22 March 2012, the General Assembly and the Alliance hosted a high-profile and extremely well-attended thematic debate on the theme "Fostering cross-cultural understanding for building peaceful and inclusive societies". Young people figured prominently in the discussions.

**Media field of action**

*Media Programme, formerly referred to as Rapid Response Media Mechanism*

74. The media programme focuses on amplifying the constructive role of media in furthering public understanding of divisive debates. To that end, it is concerned with increasing the access of media professionals to expert commentary to ensure a diversity of voices and free quality content; creating opportunities for journalists to

enhance their skills through training; and providing media empowerment trainings to academics, civil-society and opinion leaders, and marginalized or stereotyped communities. The programme facilitates a conversation on best practices in the media industry. It has continuously expanded since its inception to address the growing needs of both media and grass-roots communities.

*Global Experts*

75. The Global Experts online resource (available from theglobalexperts.org) was relaunched in April 2012 with a range of new services, including a more refined search tool for experts and a more interactive interface for expert nominations and article submissions. The database of experts itself has continued to grow. The resource numbers 400 experts, from academics to civil-society leaders and youth. Each expert generates several media impressions weekly, and around 12 to 15 media alerts are sent every month to thousands of journalists around the world. In July 2012, Global Experts will launch its first Alliance mobile application, which will enable journalists to search experts on their mobile devices according to expertise, location and language.

*Syndication of articles and article series and partnership-based multimedia projects*

76. Building on past article series ("Religion and the public space", May 2011) that reached more than 2 million readers through worldwide syndication, a new article series was devoted in March 2012 to the role(s) of youth in democratic changes. Articles were published in 15 newspapers.

77. The online resource continues to aggregate commentary by experts from media outlets around the world, while also featuring exclusive content produced by experts for the site in the form of articles, podcasts and video interviews. The articles are then sent to a network of 80 editors worldwide that publish the material through free syndication.

78. The project has also secured a wide range of partnerships to produce content, including, in particular, a partnership with the British Council and the University of Missouri School of Journalism to produce the first multimedia project on the theme "Journeys of belonging", illustrating the complex interplay of multilayered identities through 110 unique video testimonials of public figures and young leaders. In 2011, 100 videos were produced on the theme "100 questions about Islam" and were disseminated globally to summer schools, universities and media professionals.

*Training of journalists and training of civil-society and opinion leaders*

79. The media programme regularly creates opportunities for journalists to enhance their skills through training sessions with and exposure to media professionals from other parts of the world. Fewer opportunities arose this year owing to funding constraints. The media programme notably partnered with the *New York Times* Knowledge Network and provided a six-week online training course by *New York Times* journalists to Tunisian, Egyptian, French and American journalists on election coverage. Discussions are under way with prominent training institutes to multiply cross-cultural training in the months ahead.

80. In addition, the programme aims to train civil-society and opinion leaders and provide skills to best handle media opportunities. Building on successful experiments in 2010 and 2011, notably in the United Kingdom, it currently discusses collaboration with new partners in that respect.

*Meeting of television owners*

81. Following a meeting of television owners and managers at the Dead Sea in Jordan in October 2011, the media programme convened a dozen media managers at the Doha Forum to discuss the topic of the Secretary-General's international agenda, off the record. The media programme continues to grow in its role of facilitator of private meetings of editors, owners, managers and educators to discuss key issues regarding the role of media and the future of journalism.

*General collaboration in the media field: incendiary narratives*

82. A dialogue occurred between the alliance and the European Union regarding media communication in the field of prevention and radicalization, specifically on countering incendiary narratives on all sides. The Alliance shared with the European Network of Experts on Radicalization insights on its own experience in organizing skills-building workshops for journalists in Indonesia, Pakistan, the United States, Europe and the Arab world to explore the role of media in addressing tensions across communities. The Alliance has also brought to bear its experience in the area of counter-narrative programming and at-risk youth empowerment projects in various policy-setting conversations, including with actors in East Africa, Central Asia, and South and South-East Asia. The Alliance plans to embark on a new set of programmes in this area, with a focus on Pakistan and Somalia.

**Migration/integration field of action**

83. In a world of porous borders and globalized economies, diverse populations increasingly interact through continued migration. How that dynamic is portrayed in the media, discussed in the political and cultural arena and managed by policymakers determines whether societies view increased diversity as a source of strength or as a threat. The Alliance's contribution focuses on the identification and sharing of promising public policies and civil-society initiatives relating to the integration of migrants and to the narrative on migration.

*Sharing knowledge: Online Community on Migration and Integration*

84. The website "Online Community on Migration and Integration — Building Inclusive Societies" (IBIS) (available from unaoc.org/ibis), launched in May 2010, has two main aims: to highlight successful models of integration of migrants in order to counter polarizing speech and stereotypes, and to encourage the replication of these models in different contexts, while promoting further involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. Throughout 2011, the online community kept enhancing its potential, in particular by expanding its outreach and network of partners.

85. In May 2012, after two years of implementation, the Alliance carried out an evaluation of the website and decided that improvements were needed in structure and design. Work is under way with a view to deliver an improved version by the end of 2012.

*Contributing to shaping of policies and promotion of promising practices*

86. As a perfectible platform for exchange of knowledge and proposals, IBIS is the main Alliance resource for the preparation of inputs into a variety of national and international efforts. This is notably the case in respect of the preparatory work for the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which will be held by the General Assembly during its sixty-eighth session, in 2013.

87. The knowledge, networks and discussions aggregated by IBIS are also brought to bear in a regional initiative of the High Representative entitled: "Reconciling diversity and cohesion: a human rights model to build inclusive and participatory societies in European countries", described in the overview of progress.

88. In addition, the Alliance was a partner in a number of events that promoted more inclusive societies. Examples include an international seminar co-organized in Melbourne, Australia, with Deakin University on diversity, citizenship and social inclusion (October 2011); a new meeting on the theme, "The inter-ethnic city", co-organized in New York with the Permanent Mission of Italy, with the participation of all relevant United Nations agencies, key countries, experts and civil-society representatives (September 2011); and meetings organized by the International Organization for Migration in Helsinki and New York on better communication for better integration.

*Media and migration*

89. A team of experts and journalists has been assembled to prepare workshops aimed at enhancing media communication about migration. Some of the workshops will take place in the context of the Fifth Forum in Vienna (February 2013), where the issue will figure prominently.

## C. Other cross-cutting initiatives

*PLURAL+ youth video festival*

90. The Alliance, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, further developed PLURAL+, a youth video festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion, which recognizes youth as powerful agents of social change in a world too often characterized by intolerance. PLURAL+ has the support of many international partners. More than 400 videos have been received from 63 countries in the first three years.

91. Award-winning videos are being distributed on DVD, broadcast on television stations and the Internet and screened at video and film festivals and conferences around the world. PLURAL+ distribution outlets include RAI TV Education (Italy), United Nations Television and Video, COPEAM Forum, China India Forum Youth Festival, Havana Film Festival, Roots & Routes International Film Festival, the Royal Film Commission Jordan, Serbia Educational Media Festival, Televisión America Latina, Films without Borders Film Festival and Cine y Salud (Spain).

*Intercultural Innovation Award/World Intercultural Facility for Innovation*

92. The Intercultural Innovation Award selects and supports the most innovative grass-roots projects that encourage intercultural dialogue and cooperation around

the world. A competitive process ensures that projects are selected for their outstanding achievements and potential to expand to other contexts. Winners become members of the World Intercultural Facility for Innovation, drawing up to one year of support and consulting from the Alliance and the BMW Group. The programme helps winners become more efficient and expand while enabling their transfer to other contexts where they might be relevant. Through connecting these initiatives to policymakers, potential donors and the media, the Alliance and the BMW Group aim to significantly increase their impact.

93. Ten organizations among more than 400 applications from 70 countries were acknowledged at an awards ceremony held at the Doha Forum. Winners came from different regions and fields of work and included the Middle East Justice and Development Initiative (Palestine/Israel), the Maytree Foundation (Canada), Cafebabel.com (Europe), Vaga Lume Association (Brazil), Chirom e...Chino (Italy), All for Peace Radio Station (Palestine), Kickfair (Germany), Irenia (Spain), Amara-Universal Subtitles (United States) and Youth Empowering Parents (Canada).

94. The World Intercultural Facility for Innovation team has started working with the 10 organizations and is at the stage of replicating some of their innovative ideas. For example, 18 organizations from eight countries are interested in adapting to their cities the winner project "DiverseCity onBoard" from the Maytree Foundation and the Middle East Justice and Development Initiative has started operating in Egypt and Turkey; it will operate in Jordan and Spain in mid-2012.

95. The BMW Group has announced its strengthened commitment to the project for at least the next two years.

*Fellowship programme*

96. In September 2009, the Alliance launched its fellowship programme, aimed at facilitating exposure for emerging leaders from North America, Europe, and Muslim-majority countries to media, culture, politics, institutions, civil society and religion in one another's countries and generating knowledge exchange, understanding and productive partnerships across borders. In the long run, the Alliance aims to create a network of emerging leaders who will bring fresh perspectives to relations between the different countries and regions and advocate new approaches.

97. After two successful pilot editions in 2010 and 2011, the fellowship programme is now developed on a biannual frequency. It is supported financially by Germany and Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace and developed in partnership with the British Council, the League of Arab States, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Qatar Committee of the Alliance of Civilizations and the Institute of International Education in the United States. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Government of Jordan have also become partners as at 2012. The early-2012 edition brought emerging leaders from the United States and Europe to Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

98. The Arab Spring has brought even greater relevance to the programme, as it provides a unique opportunity for emerging leaders to learn from and connect with their peers. A meeting of alumni will take place in early 2013 to develop joint initiatives and collaboration.

*Promoting a global conversation: network of Dialogue Cafés*

99. Dialogue Café is a non-profit initiative that uses cutting-edge, videoconferencing technology to enable face-to-face conversations between diverse groups of people from around the world. It allows them to create a global community for sharing experiences, learning from each other and working together to make the world a better place. Dialogue Cafés are already open in Paris; Lisbon; Amsterdam; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Cleveland, United States; and Ramallah. London; Beirut; Wroclaw, Poland; and São Paulo in Brazil are scheduled to open in 2012. New Dialogue Cafés in Tunisia; Belgrade; Lagos, Nigeria; and Brisbane in Australia are in the pipeline and will all be operational by mid-2013.

100. Expanding the network of Dialogue Cafés to three strategic areas is a priority for 2012-2013: Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Senegal); South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan); South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean region (Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey). Twenty new Dialogue Cafés are being considered.

## V. The Fourth Global Forum, Doha, December 2011

101. The Forum continued to be the towering event of the year, as it brought together 2,500 representatives from all constituencies to expand the global conversation on a main theme, review progress on ongoing activities and launch new cooperative efforts to foster cross-cultural understanding. At the invitation of Qatar, the Fourth Alliance of Civilizations Forum was held in Doha from 11 to 13 December 2011. It focused on the role of culture, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue to foster sustainable development.

102. Intercultural trust was seen both as a condition and a result of equitable development. More than 50 sessions and workshops explored ways to boost intercultural dialogue through improved education, better protection of minorities, more enlightening tourism, better cultural industries, changing narratives, greater youth participation and enhanced individual responsibility.

103. As a result, the High Representative noted the emergence of a broader concept of sustainable development, which would include a cultural diversity pillar. He suggested that the Alliance might need to prioritize additional actions in regions where achievement of the Millennium Development Goals may be boosted through addressing prejudices and discrimination, which are drivers for exclusion, tension and conflict.

104. A number of new projects were listed and announcements made at the end of the Forum, either as extensions of existing activities (more summer schools, additional Dialogue Cafés, extended fellowship programmes, scaling up the "Do one thing for diversity and inclusion" campaign, following up on the "Reconciling diversity and cohesion" launch, more easily reachable Global Experts), or as new proposals (an Alliance film festival in Shanghai, a possible Alliance observatory, various corporate initiatives).

105. The Fifth Forum in Vienna (27-28 February 2013) will focus on the theme, "Promoting responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue". A concept note is under preparation for submission to consultations of the Group of Friends

(ministerial meeting on 28 September 2012), as well as to a number of other relevant partners.

# VI. Outreach

106. The Alliance's multifarious outreach and communications efforts are driven by a wide range of projects and initiatives that focus on promoting cross-cultural dialogue in different corners of the world. They include global campaigns on diversity, small grants targeting grass-roots initiatives, holding journalist training sessions and engaging media owners and editors, supporting youth initiatives, facilitating exchanges among young leaders and, most of all, the annual Forum, which many describe as the premier cross-cultural event of the year.

107. Beyond this, there is direct communication with and outreach to the media through press releases, newsletters and media alerts. Media training sessions and the Global Experts resource offer additional ways to engage media professionals.

108. This year's "Do one thing" campaign, a social media project to celebrate the United Nations World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development on 21 May, also merits special mention. The campaign's Facebook posts targeted nearly 4 million individuals through the network that was created. In addition, the accompanying Twitter campaign made 7.3 million impressions (tweets received by people) and had a reach of 3 million people (who potentially saw those tweets).

109. On the technical side, the main Alliance website, UNAOC.org is an essential vehicle for raising the Alliance's visibility. Its traffic has increased by nearly 25 per cent in the past year, most of it by completely new visitors. The Alliance's outreach through social media also continued apace, including a more than fourfold increase in the number of people visiting the main site through Facebook and a near tripling of its Twitter followers in the last 12 months.

110. In spite of the aforementioned gains, there are many areas of improvement in outreach from which the organization might benefit as a whole. More practically, the Alliance would benefit tremendously from having support from an outside communications agency or an internal team that is dedicated solely to the task of giving the organization greater visibility.

# VII. Governance: replenishment mechanism for the Trust Fund and the secretariat

### Setting up a voluntary replenishment mechanism for the Trust Fund

111. In spite of a steady expansion of the Alliance's role and activities, the resources at its disposal continued to be significantly limited compared to the target level, erratic and almost impossible to predict. For the 2011 budget year, actual expenditures had to be kept in the range of $4 million, against a modest target of $5.15 million.

112. The High Representative therefore proposed a funding model based on periodic replenishments, designed to increase the predictability of the Trust Fund's resources, to diversify the array of donors by enlarging it to the private sector and philanthropy and to secure funding for the Alliance's activities well in advance. He

further proposed an innovative mechanism of consultation with the community of donors, whether public or private.

113. The first replenishment session took place in Istanbul, Turkey from 31 May to 1 June 2012, at the initiative of the Prime Minister of Turkey, who co-chaired the event with the Secretary-General. Some 70 countries, 15 international organizations and a number of corporate and foundation partners attended. The session secured pledges for $7.5 million, below a more ambitious target but still a clear improvement in terms of volume and forecast. A second session will be held in the context of the Fifth Forum in Vienna in February 2013. A revised 2012 budget and a draft 2013 budget will be prepared by the secretariat in September 2012.

**The secretariat**

114. A deep imbalance persisted between the set of tasks or programmes and the human resources of the secretariat. They will not suffice in the longer run. Helpfully, fresh secondments were pledged at the Partners' Forum. More will be sought, with a view to securing a better cultural balance. Funds earmarked for programmes may help ease the overall situation.

115. The secretariat will continue to regularly review and improve the match between priorities and staff allocation and critically revisit the need for any programme to be carried out by the team, rather than partners. The selection of a new Director for the secretariat is under way.

# VIII. Conclusions

116. The past year brought to light a number of challenges faced by the Alliance as a result of its growth over the past five years. Furthermore, they raise the question of whether the Alliance has reached the limits of its capacity within the light framework in which it was set up and developed.

117. At first glance, over the past five years the Alliance has managed to:

(a) Become a well-recognized and credible United Nations platform for intercultural dialogue and cooperation in spite of its sui generis nature and status that make it different but complementary to any other United Nations agency, as well as to other intergovernmental organizations;

(b) Profile itself as an emerging soft-power tool aimed at addressing our growing difficulties of living together, listening to each other and respecting each other by means of fighting against ignorance, deconstructing stereotypes and misconceptions that deepen patterns of hostility and mistrust and developing a culture of dialogue, tolerance, justice, human rights and human dignity;

(c) Reach out to civil society, grass-roots organizations and ordinary people in addition to the classic stakeholders as a bridge builder, convener and catalyst, helping to give impetus to innovative projects aimed at reducing polarization among nations and cultures through joint pursuits and mutually beneficial partnerships;

(d) Shape a coherent framework for the Alliance in spite of its growing diversity. Thanks to the vision developed and the strong commitment of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and of the two co-sponsors, political support for the Alliance

grew and enlarged its scope, expanded its network of partners around the world and developed a number of landmark actions.

118. Over the past five years, however, the Alliance has not yet managed to:

(a) Find its appropriate place within the United Nations system and develop full cooperation within the United Nations family by exploring its untapped resources and acting as a true horizontal soft-power tool. This means that a number of issues have to be clarified: how intercultural dialogue and cooperation can become an effective tool in the United Nations peacebuilding and conflict prevention agenda; how the Alliance's national plans and regional strategies can contribute in an effective way towards realizing human rights, dialogue, tolerance, democracy and human dignity; how intercultural dialogue and cooperation as prompted by the Alliance can help to boost sustainable peace and development, including the Millennium Development Goals; how the links between the Alliance and the United Nations global counter-terrorism strategy can be made more specific and practically driven;

(b) Reach an optimal institutional arrangement that allows the Alliance to be more rooted locally and ensure appropriate follow-up for its initiatives;

(c) Secure enough resources to implement actions on the ground, namely to expand and consolidate its flagship programmes and develop action plans around the two Regional Strategies adopted.

119. On the basis of these preliminary observations, the High Representative feels that it is his duty in the coming months to prepare a critical overview on the progress achieved by the Alliance in implementing its mission during the past five years, and to develop possible scenarios for its future evolution in order to cope with the main challenges it faces in a world shaped by rising tensions and uncertainties.